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Bypassing Federal Education Policies: The OECD and the Case of Switzerland

Die Umgehung föderativer Bildungspolitik: Die OECD und das Beispiel der Schweiz

(Ed.) Internationalization is the catchword of today's education policy in its endeavor to overcome its nationalist roots. Taking the example of the OECD, the following article shows how international education policy enforces its objectives even in countries which traditionally have had a federal, i.e. local or regional organization, such as Switzerland.

(Red.) Internationalisierung ist das Schlagwort der gegenwärtigen Bildungspolitik, welche sich bemüht, die nationalen Wurzeln zu überwinden. Der nachfolgende Beitrag zeigt am Beispiel der OECD, wie die internationale Bildungspolitik ihre Ziele auch in Ländern wie der Schweiz durchsetzt, die traditionellerweise föderativ, das heißt lokal bzw. regional, organisiert sind.

The new catchword in education policy research is “internationalization.” Whereas education policy has traditionally been considered a prerogative of the modern nation state, international forces are now more and more influential. In so-called developed countries one of the most important international players is the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which invented and coordinates, among other things, the worldwide Program for International Student Assessment (PISA).¹

Despite the fact that the OECD's recommendations are not mandatory – some describe it as a “toothless tiger” (see Leibfried/Martens 2008, 6) – the organization has persuaded many countries to adopt basic ideas about education policy. If this seems unsurprising in countries with highly centralized structures such as France, it is certainly remarkable in countries with pronounced federalist structures such as Switzerland. The extent to which Switzerland sees itself as part of the process of “internationalization” is evident in a statement made by the

¹ See for instances Jakobi/Martens 2010; Knodel/Martens/Olano/Popp 2010; Martens/Nagel/Windzio 2010; Tröhler 2010; Martens/Rusconi/Leuze 2007; Rizvi/Lingard 2006; Amaral 2006; Rinne/Kallo/Hokka 2004; Lawn/Lingard 2002; Henry/Lingard/Rizvi/Taylor 2001.

Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)²: “Although the results [of international assessments in education, RB] are not binding in theory, they bind Switzerland in practice” (EDK 2002, 4).

This paper investigates why and how international players have attained such influence over the formulation of national educational policy, especially in a country as federalist as Switzerland. I would like to point out that Switzerland has not always shown the willingness to accept outside expertise that is implied by the above quote. Indeed, over the years Swiss authorities have repeatedly refused to adopt an instrument developed by the OECD: the Reviews of National Policies for Education. Initiated in the 1960s, these national reviews use small groups of international experts to analyze the education policies of OECD member states. They focus on the institutional dimensions of a country’s educational policy as well as on the structures of the educational system and relate their observations to the economic and social policy fields of the country under examination (OECD 1979). Though every individual member state of the OECD had undergone at least one comprehensive education policy review by the early 1980s (Heidenheimer 1996, 586), Switzerland continually declined official requests from the OECD. In 1986 the general secretary of the EDK justified Switzerland’s position in the journal *Doppelpunkt*: “We would have needed experts who were miracle workers in order to implement the necessary differentiation in our federalist educational and political system” (Arnet 1986b, 20).

Yet in 1987, only one year later, the Swiss authorities accepted the OECD request. In 1989, the EDK published the first and only background report, the OECD *Länderexamen Bildungspolitik* (EDK 1989a+b), and Swiss education policy was analyzed by four experts from neighboring countries in the course of a two-week long investigation (see EDK 1990; OECD 1991).³ What precipitated this turnaround? Below I analyze the factors, conditions, motives, and rationales of this “revolutionary” act in the federalist tradition of Switzerland. My analysis aims to improve our understanding why Swiss opposition to external recommendations faded and local democratically legitimized policymakers willingly (or unwillingly) placed themselves in a submissive position.

In exploring the contextual circumstances that triggered Swiss authorities to permit the OECD review, I examine unpublished sources – minutes, correspondence, documents – from Swiss federal agencies and the EDK. Before I do so, I will briefly discuss the actor behind these reviews and indicate crucial changes in its steering mechanisms during the 1980s – the decade when Switzerland agreed to participate. I then outline the reasoning for, and breakdown of, Switzerland’s long resistance. I argue that a combination of internal and external factors brought about a turnaround in Swiss thinking. In the conclusion I summarize my claims and point to further research in this area.

2 The strongly federalist character of Switzerland’s education policy is also mirrored in the absence of a Swiss national ministry of education. The EDK is the association of cantonal ministries of education, whose plenary assembly, and ultimate decision-making authority, consists of the cantons’ ministry principals (Arnet 1985, 71f.).

3 In 1971 Switzerland did take part in the OECD’s *politique nationale de la science* [national science policy] (OECD 1971), but this program was not as comprehensive as the *Reviews of National Policies for Education*.

OECD's New Steering Mechanisms for National Education Policies in the 1980s

The OECD emerged from the OEEC, the Organization for European Economic Co-operation, a part of the Marshall Plan responsible for Europe's economic recovery after the Second World War. In order to create an economic counterpart to NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) that would help member states achieve sustainable economic expansion, the OEEC was expanded into the OECD in 1961 (OECD 2008, 9). So why is a genuine *economic* policy organization interested in *education* policy?

In contrast to the UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization), the OECD has no mandate in the realm of education (Weymann/Martens 2005). Nevertheless its education policy programs have grown in size and scope over the years. Back when the OECD was still the OEEC, it began to foster technological and scientific education in response to the so-called sputnik shock. Later the OECD legitimized these undertakings with economic rationales (Papadopoulos 1996) – namely, that of human capital theory (developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s). This theory, although still widely accepted, is based on weak empirical evidence and contingent on a variety of external factors (Meyer/Boli/Thomas/Ramirez 2005, 92). In the 1960s and 1970s the OECD primarily undertook institutional expansions⁴ and widened their research scope. The 1980s and 1990s saw changes to old instruments as well as innovations, including the program International Indicators and Evaluation of Educational Systems (INES), PISA and *thematic* reviews of education policy. The latter represents a further development – introduced in the late 1980s (Henry/Lingard/Rizvi/Taylor 2001, 42) – of the comprehensive education policy reviews, in which Switzerland took part in 1989. Both kinds of examinations follow the same scheme: the country under review prepares a background report for a team of three to six experts⁵ who visit for a period of at least two weeks in order to study educational institutions and talk with local actors. Afterward, the experts write a review of their impressions and recommendations. Delegates and the OECD's Educational Committee then meet and discuss the review. The costs are born by the OECD and the country under review, though the latter pays a significantly larger share (Papadopoulos 1996; OECD 1979).

The crucial change between the comprehensive and the thematic reviews lies in the fact that the new system is more strongly influenced by the OECD. A team in Paris selects the subjects and a framework to compare members, and then interprets the collected data (Martens 2007, 51ff.; Henry/Lingard/Rizvi/Taylor 2001, 42ff.). This increase of control is also mirrored in the INES program, which collects and compares statistical data about the member countries. Although OECD's educational research unit – the Center for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) – initially resisted efforts by France and the United States to establish internationally comparable data,⁶ it eventually gave in to pressure from these

4 One example is the founding of the Center for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) in 1968.

5 Expert teams contain a mixture of high-ranking politicians, academics, and administrative personnel working in education policy or related fields (OECD 1979). They are nominated by the OECD and in consultation with the participating state (Schuller 2006, 59).

6 According to Kerstin Martens and Klaus Dieter Wolf, both governments intended to override reform blockades in their respective countries (Martens/Wolf 2009, 367f.). Besides the USA and

powerful members and began work in 1987. Despite initial hesitance, the first publication of data, in 1992, titled *Education at a Glance*, met with much success and new volumes have since been released annually (Henry/Lingard/Rizvi/Taylor 2001, 87ff.). Thereafter the pace of comparative projects accelerated, and the OECD developed PISA without any request from its member countries (Martens/Wolf 2009). Though all of the above instruments lack legal force, countries have accepted the OECD framework for international comparison – thereby ceding their own educational authority and elevating this international actor to the status of an expert concerning their educational systems (Martens 2007; Amaral 2006). This process has put into question OECD's status as a mere forum for shared experience. More and more, it has become a knowledge-producing “expert institution” (Martens 2007, 53), no longer an instrument of its member countries but “a political actor in its own right” (Rizvi/Lingard 2006, 255). This change in the function of the OECD is significant for the following analysis: it began right around the time that Switzerland agreed to its first comprehensive educational policy review.

Switzerland's OECD Review in 1989

The notion of a *national* education policy – as in evidence, of course, in the OECD's Reviews of National Policies for Education – is an explosive subject for Swiss education policy. “The money and the cannons belong to the federal government, but the schools belong to the cantons,” was the slogan used in an 1882 campaign against the centralization of Swiss education (quoted in: Arnet 1997, 170). In the wake of this resistance, the EDK was founded in 1897 to coordinate cantonal forces against encroachments by the federal government. The undertaking was successful; ever since, national measures have required special legitimization⁷ (Osterwalder/Weber 2004, 16), and national education policy, while more pronounced today than it was in 1989, has remained limited in scope (Criblez 2008, 279). Considering this historical background, Switzerland's participation in an OECD country review in 1989 is a far greater surprise than its nonparticipation up until then. The OECD asked Switzerland to submit to an education policy review three times: in 1976, in 1983, and in 1987. As one might expect, the EDK – the traditional keeper of cantonal plurality – played an important role in Switzerland's early refusals. Even though the rationale of the EDK board changed from 1976 to 1983,⁸ the argument remained the same at its core: the EDK saw neither the need nor any benefit for such a review. Only in the area of foreign policy did it see any advantage, since the board was sure that compared to other countries, Switzerland was performing well and “wouldn't have to shy away from comparison.” But at the same time the EDK rejected “a foreign arbitrator” and was worried about the large amount of work that would bring Switzerland little benefit (StaLU A 1271/190: 4/22/1983,

France, the project was also encouraged by Austria and Switzerland (Weymann/Martens 2005, 77).

7 For an example of this legitimization process, see the debates surrounding HarmoS (Harmonisierung der obligatorischen Schule [Harmonization of compulsory education]), a recent and partly failed project aiming to standardize basic aspects of compulsory education.

8 The EDK board, which consists of eight canton representatives, is responsible for discussing in advance some tasks of EDK's plenary assembly. In some cases the EDK board has the right to decide (Arnet 1985, 71f.).

5). These statements, which the EDK board made shortly before it voted on participation in 1983, make it clear that, from the Swiss perspective, the most it could gain by taking part was increased standing in the OECD community. Though EDK resistance wasn't as strong as seven years earlier, the possibility of added prestige did not outweigh the effort, and the suggestion was defeated once again.

The turning point came in 1987, when the regional northwestern EDK⁹ visited the OECD in Paris. This trip shed new light on Switzerland's missed opportunity for an educational policy review, and a new request from the OECD arrived soon after. The EDK, which had hitherto adopted a reluctant stance, surprisingly changed its position from a leading opponent to a leading supporter. According to the minutes, the EDK board discussion did not last a long time. The conclusion they came to was that federalism should no longer be used "to avoid" an OECD review (StaLU A 1271/191: 9/4/1987, 2). This conclusion rested on the argument that Switzerland was the sole OECD member that didn't take part in the education review. Only one year earlier, the general secretary of the EDK believed that outside experts were incapable of dealing with Switzerland's complexity, and any review they submitted would lead to "greater confusion," not produce "useful suggestions" (Arnet 1986b, 20). By 1987, however, the EDK board saw an OECD review as "reasonable" (StaLU A 1427/358: 7/20/1987; see also EDK 1989a, 7).¹⁰ The EDK not only assured the federal government that it would cooperate; it also assumed most of the responsibility and costs.¹¹ The EDK solved the problem of the vast differences between the cantons by selecting six representative cantons: Zurich, Aargau, Neuenburg, Wallis, Tessin, and Uri. Four experts from neighboring countries examined these cantons on the primary and secondary (I + II) levels¹² (EDK 1990; OECD 1991). The process for selecting cantons seems to have been biased by self-selection: more than half were represented in the decision making board. Mainly due to a disagreement between the experts,¹³ the OECD took two years to publish the review. Its content was heavily criticized by Swiss authorities, by the OECD secretariat, and by the experts themselves (OECD 1991). Despite its many deficiencies, however, the review became an engine for reform during the 1990s (Gonon 1998, 411ff., 479f.). The extent to which Swiss authorities incorporated the review's recommendations was not part of my analysis, but sources point to a strongly selective strategy.

9 The EDK has four regional conferences to facilitate cooperation between the cantons (BBW 1984, 309f.).

10 The OECD's demand for an education policy review was not debated in the plenary assembly. The representatives could, through the regional conferences, decide only if their canton was to be a part of the review process.

11 Though the federal government provided support for the background report, the largest portion of the expenditures were shared between the six participating cantons and the EDK.

12 Strikingly, two of the four experts (from Germany, Austria, France and Italy) were neither educational researchers nor active in education policy, but were economists (see EDK 1990).

13 Due to a disagreement with his French colleague about the federalist structure of Swiss education policy, the German expert quit the study and refused to participate in the review after the trip.

The Factors, Motives, and Rationale behind Switzerland's Participation

According to the minutes of the EDK board meeting, the decision to participate in the OECD review encountered little resistance. Why? Which factors allowed what once seemed so unreasonable to become reasonable? The first clues can be found in the EDK's stated rationale. In several newspapers¹⁴ the EDK predominantly justified the shift in its position by arguing that it was a preemptive act in light of European integration and the possibility of Switzerland's admission to the European Economic Area (EEA) in 1992. This public rationale deviated from EDK's internal viewpoint, however. In a letter sent by the EDK to an expert who had expressed interest in Switzerland's motives for participation, two reasons can be extracted: On the one hand they didn't want "to remain the eternal outsider, ever playing the exception card with intergovernmental organizations Switzerland is full members of." On the other hand the EDK wanted "to bring more discussion and more self-awareness" with a report written by foreign experts. They were convinced that such a review would – "no matter what it says" – have "more effect than a prophet in one's own country" (StaLU A 1427/840: 3/1/1991). The first rationale mentioned in the letter follows the argumentation in the minutes of the EDK board I discussed in the previous section: international pressure seemed to have pushed Swiss authorities to display a sign of cooperation. The second part indicates a strategic decision to mobilize domestic policy, regardless of the review's benefit. A contextualization of these clues sheds light on their relevance beyond a rhetorical function. By analyzing internal as well as external forces and their interplay, I have identified the following four factors behind Switzerland's participation: growing international pressure, increasing importance of the OECD, domestic policy blockades, and a change of membership in the decision board.

The first factor was mounting international pressure. Switzerland had participated actively on international committees ever since the 1960s and 1970s. With the exception of the European Community (EC), which developed its own educational policy action program beginning in 1976, and the Nordic Council of Ministers, Switzerland had been represented in all the intergovernmental organizations (UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and the OECD) that have been involved in the area of education (Blanc 1981, 3). By the end of the 1960s, an EDK staff member noted that international activities were increasing to the point that they would "produce a flood of paper that only a specialist could survey or peruse" (StaLU A 1270/182: 5/5/1967, 3). However, membership in all of these organizations presented Switzerland with a dilemma: on the one hand, according to the Federal Constitution, it is the federal government that is responsible for international relations, but on the other hand, the cantons maintain a large degree of autonomy with respect to the educational system. The EDK, as the representative of the cantons, and the federal government agreed to an informal arrangement according to which a mixture of both institutions would be represented at international organizations under mutual agreement, and the costs customarily shared. It was observed that Switzerland's receptivity to international influence was partly based on the fact that individual cantons were more willing to adopt innovations suggested by international organizations than to voluntarily imitate the practices of a neighboring canton (Luisoni 1997, 131; Blanc 1981, 8). However, this tendency only applied to international

14 See *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *Tages-Anzeiger*, *Bund*, *Basler Zeitung*, *Luzerner Neuste Nachrichten*, and *Tribune de Genève* (StaLU A 1427/358: 11/7/1989).

relations on a “practical level.” The moment that any “declarative,” let alone legally binding, elements came into play, the forfeiture of autonomy entailed was seen as too great, inducing the cantons to resist vigorously (EDK Jahresbericht 1988, 2). This situation began to change around the late 1980s with the signing of the Agreement on Education between UNESCO and the Council of Europe¹⁵, which concerned the area of tertiary education, and with the comprehensive OECD review. Both academic research (Gonon 1998, 50; Criblez 2008, 278-295) and the EDK – in its public statements – situated these events in the slipstream of ongoing European integration, specifically Switzerland’s possible admission to the EEA in 1992. Regarding participation in the OECD review, the EDK’s informal arguments, in contrast to the public rationale, were more nebulous, referring only to international organizations in general. This indefiniteness pervades all informal EDK documents since the beginning of the 1980s. In them one can detect the increasing importance of international relations: For example, in their minutes, participation in the same international conferences where the EDK had participated before were suddenly given more extensive notice, and from 1984 on, the EDK annual report incorporated a chapter on “International Relations,” which went on to become a standard feature over the following years. In a presentation at the plenary assembly, an EDK representative even described international relations in the area of education as having existential importance: “Given the rapid pace of change in technology, business and society, it would be especially wrong today to stop directing our attention to what is happening abroad, since the scope of international networking in all realms is so extensive that we have an existential interest in such collaboration” (StaLU A 1271/209: 10/24/25/1985, 17).

This statement reveals the intense pressure for collaboration on an international level – neglecting the international arena is suddenly tantamount to a threat to one’s very existence. However, the specific reasons behind this new level of importance accorded to education policy are never stated. European integration is not mentioned in the informal documents until 1988, after the positive decision of the EDK board regarding an OECD review. In addition Swiss officials only expected an EEA admission to affect the tertiary education sector, which was excluded from the 1989 review. It seems that the EDK tried to publically legitimize the OECD review in retrospect by pointing to developments in Europe. Although the prospect of EEA admission may have amplified the perception of increasing internationalization, it was not the sole catalyst for Switzerland’s decision. The informal documents point rather to global changes in the area of education, which also led the OECD to develop new instruments for governance.

The perception of mounting internationalization had ripple effects, increasing both external and internal pressure. The old tug of war about educational policy between the cantons and the federal government spilled over into foreign policy. Once the EDK believed its sovereignty was in danger, it began to fight actively for its right to cooperate with and to attend international committee meetings. The ad hoc agreement between the federal government and the EDK regarding representation in international organizations came under

15 The UNESCO Conventions relate to the reciprocal recognition of programs of studies and diplomas in the European region (StaLU A 1271/211: 27&28/10/1988). The Conventions of the Council of Europe pertain to the equivalency of study periods in Europe, recognition of university diplomas, equivalency of diplomas leading to admission to universities, and the continuation of scholarship payments during study stays abroad (StaLU A 1271/211: 27&28/10/1988, Annex, 8).

ever increasing fire – at the very point in time when the EDK voted for an OECD review. The EDK's change of heart, therefore, was influenced not only by international forces but also by internal pressure: the EDK feared that if it did not deepen its involvement on the international stage, it would loose ground against the federal government.

A second trigger for the EDK's decision can be identified in the new position of the OECD in the landscape of Swiss foreign policy. Switzerland is a founding member of the OEEC as well as the OECD. Both the federal government and the EDK are represented on the organization's education committee. The OECD, together with the Council of Europe, has always played a crucial role in Swiss foreign education policy (see also Blanc 1981, 7), since this organization has provided Switzerland a platform for meeting with the neighboring states of the European Community without any legally binding regulations. In addition, both of these organizations enjoyed a higher regard than UNESCO, since the problems of the Western members were more comparable and the UN organization was perceived increasingly as "only a development and aid program" (StaLU A 1271/209: 10/24/25/1985, 17). The strong role of the OECD is also reflected in the manifold forms of cooperation between Switzerland and the OECD. For example, in 1971 Switzerland participated in an OECD examination of scientific policy that was coordinated by the Swiss federal government (see footnote 3). Individual institutions and cantons took part in so-called mini-examinations¹⁶ that were administered by the OECD. In addition, Switzerland took part in all of the OECD programs – the Programme on Educational Building (PEB), Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE), and in CERI (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation), which were not financed from the core OECD budget, but instead through additional payments. CERI proved to be of particular importance for Switzerland, because of the fact that this body of the OECD seems to function as part of Switzerland's internal state structure, serving as a hinge between national institutions.

During the 1980s, the OECD became even more important for Switzerland. This is mainly due to two reasons: On the one hand, the OECD gained ground over its rivals in the context of increasing resource shortages during the 1980s (see Mundy 2007). UNESCO was forced to deal with the exit of two of its prominent members, namely the USA in 1984 and Great Britain in 1985. Similar to the problems experienced by UNESCO, the OECD's greatest co-actor in Swiss foreign education policy, the Council of Europe, suffered a crisis during the 1980s. On the other hand, the previously cited statistical changes helped the OECD gain greater influence. Switzerland, or rather the federal government, was one of the most active participants in the indicator project (INES), initiated by the OECD in 1987. This is astonishing because obtaining statistical data had been a consistent bone of contention between the federal government and the cantons. The active participation of the federal government thereby seems to belie strategic considerations whereby federal authorities sought to leverage international organizations to win out over the cantons.¹⁷ Finally, the visit from the north-western EDK, which got the ball rolling, also indicates the dominant presence of the OECD by the time the EDK agreed to the review.

16 In 1977 the federal government coordinated a small examination of the *Institut Romand de Recherches et de Documentation Pédagogiques* (IRDP). In 1984 the canton level first came into play, when the canton of Tessin contracted with CERI for an evaluation of its teacher training programs.

17 A further element in the OECD's new position can be seen in its partial turning away from the idea of comprehensive education, a change viewed very favorably by the EDK (Arnet in: Gonon 1998, 413).

According to the informal argumentation, strategic considerations also played a key role in the EDK's decision. During the 1980s, politicians tended to neglect education policy and made severe cuts to education spending (see also Gonon 1998, 45; Rüesch 1985, 66f.). In addition, education coordination was stuck at both the vertical level (between the cantons and the federal government)¹⁸ and the horizontal level (between the cantons). One example of the horizontal difficulties was the attempt to coordinate the start of the school year that was initiated in the 1970s and failed definitively at the beginning of the 1980s, at which point the decision had to be handed over to the federal government. In order to improve the situation, the general secretary of the EDK proposed a review system between the cantons similar to that of the OECD (Arnet 1986b, 20). This suggestion, as with other internal efforts to eliminate obstacles, failed to gain traction. As a result, an external review came to seem like a promising alternative – a way to liberate Swiss education policy from its “Sleeping Beauty” status.¹⁹ Strategic motives alone, however, cannot explain the EDK's decision. For the EDK never sought an OECD review on its own initiative; the OECD had always been the one to take the first step.

A last factor to consider was the new influx of members on the EDK board. Only two of the eight cantonal representatives who were on the board in 1983, when the OECD review was defeated for the second time, were still on the board in 1987. In addition, one of the members who had left was an influential and vocal opponent of the OECD review. But here again, new board members alone cannot have determined the EDK's decision, since even the *new* board did not initiate the OECD review, and the board's collective change of heart can also be seen at the intrapersonal level.

Conclusion

This paper examined why Switzerland's resistance to an OECD report on Swiss educational policy broke down at the end of the 1980s. This occurrence, to the extent that it implicitly brought with it a unification of traditional federal policies, extended significant legitimacy to the OECD. Moreover, Swiss authorities took this step without expecting considerable benefits in return. Though their public rationale seemed partly rhetorical in function, a closer look at the situation has revealed a combination of determining policy factors, both foreign and domestic. In their impact these factors are not sharply distinguishable; it was their interplay that opened the door for the OECD review in Switzerland.

My microanalysis has shed light on certain mechanisms of internationalization, but further research is needed on the structural and discursive levels. The case of Switzerland shows that, at the beginning of the 1980s, education policy entered a maelstrom of internationalization during which the OECD modified old instruments and adopted new ones. By justifying this process as part of European integration, Swiss authorities gave the trend a face and, with it, a legitimization. But where did the pressure to embrace internalization originate?

¹⁸ The problems on the vertical level are discussed in Arnet 1986a.

¹⁹ However, the EDK seemed to be seeking a domestic solution, since it had already signed on to a project entitled *Education in the Switzerland of Tomorrow* (BICHMO), half a year before agreeing to an OECD review. The expectation was that this study would provide a new impetus for the stalled coordination work.

Put differently: why did Switzerland perceive international relations in educational policy as existential?

The other issue that requires further examination is the interconnection between the state domestic structure and international actors in general and individual organizations in particular. My analysis has shown that, contrary to what one might expect, a federalist system can be a helper of internalization as well as a hinderer. In trying to preserve its sovereign power, the EDK resisted encroachments from the Swiss federal government, but in doing so became dependent on – and a virtual puppet of – the OECD.

A comprehensive analysis of the historical relationship between a particular state and international actors could highlight institutional dependencies that might tacitly foster internationalization. After the comprehensive OECD examination in 1989, Switzerland underwent a multitude of thematic reviews²⁰ and participated from the start in PISA, a program whose interventions have been far more extensive than those of the reviews of national policies. In the realm of comparative educational studies, the EDK not only crossed a threshold; they unlocked a floodgate.

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